

FRONTISPIECE.



FRONTISPIECE.



5.

ROMAN STORIES;

OR THE

HISTORY

OF THE

Seven Wise Masters

OF

R O M E:

CONTAINING

SEVEN DAYS ENTERTAINMENT,

IN MANY

PLEASANT NARRATIONS

WHEREIN

The Treachery of evil Counsellors is discovered,
Innocency cleared, and the Wisdom of the
SEVEN WISE MASTERS displayed.

THE FIFTH EDITION.

LONDON:

Printed by T. SABINE and SON, No. 81,
Shoe Lane, Fleet Street.

ROMAN STORIES
 OF THE
 HISTORY
 OF THE
 ROMAN
 EMPIRE
 IN SEVEN
 DAYS OF ENTERTAINMENT
 IN PART



The Treasury of the City of London
 Innocence, Liberty, and the Wisdom of the
 Seven Wise Masters, Chapter
 Printed by T. S. and Son, No. 81,
 Fleet Street.

SEV
 The
 K
 E
 an
 N
 look
 dau
 had
 hop
 giv
 gra
 gra



THE
HISTORY
OF THE
SEVEN WISE MASTERS OF ROME.

The Emperor of Rome marries the Daughter of the King of Lombardy, by whom he has a Son.—The Empress falls sick, makes her request to the Emperor, and dies.

IN the great and flourishing City of Rome, reigned a famous emperor, named Pontianus, who took to wife a very beautiful and virtuous lady, only daughter to the King of Lombardy ; by whom he had a son called Dioclesian, who was not only the hopes of his royal parents, but the whole empire, giving in his childhood great tokens of a wise and gracious prince, and improving as in years so in graces of mind and body.

But as fortune is constant in nothing but inconsistency, ~~so she gave in a short time a visible instance~~ of her mutability, and a check to the whole court: for scarce had the young prince attained to the age of seven years, when death, by a violent fever, ~~summoned the empress to his dark abodes, who, finding~~ no hopes of recovery, addressed herself to the emperor in the following words:



'O my dear lord,' said she, 'I shall never recover from this grievous sickness; and therefore as nothing lies so much upon my spirit, next to the welfare of your majesty, as that of your young son, I have one request to make, which I hope you will not deny.' The emperor, having promised to refuse her nothing, the dying lady said, 'I am very sensible, my lord, that after my death, it will be very convenient, for the good of your dominions, to marry again; and as step-mothers do not always prove kind and affectionate

onate to the children that are not their own, I beseech you that my child may be educated and trained up in all manner of virtuous learning, out of the court, and not under her tuition.

The emperor having promised punctually to fulfil her request, the empress turning her head, soon after expired, leaving the emperor and the whole court under unspeakable concern and grief, and they mourned for her many days.

How the Emperor committed his Son to Seven Wise Masters, to be instructed in Learning.

AFTER the funeral obsequies of the empress were solemnized, the emperor began to think of performing her request, and to learn his son, while he was young, the art to govern himself, that he might be better able to take upon him, after his decease, the government of the empire. In order to this, he assembled the lords of his counsel, to give him their advice in the matter; who unanimously answered, 'In Rome, my lord, are Seven Wise Masters, famous for their skill in all sorts of learning; let them be sent for, and deliver to them your son, to be educated and instructed in arts and sciences.'

The emperor approving of their advice, sent a messenger to the Seven Wise Masters, to require them to hasten to his court without delay.

Whereupon they immediately came before the emperor, who said, 'Sirs, I have but one son, and him I intend to commit to your care, to be instructed in all sorts of literature, so that he may be accomplished, and fit to govern the Roman empire after my decease; for which you shall receive all the encouragement

agement and rewards that you may expect from my royal bounty and favour.



The philosophers gladly undertook the charge, believing that they should gain great reputation, by reason of the majestic and docible spirit that appeared to be in the young prince. And the better to succeed in their endeavours, they made choice of a place without the City of Rome, pleasantly situated and adorned with fair fountains, murmuring springs, and pleasant gardens; and every thing so commodious and delightful as rendered a continual harmony night and day.

The Emperor, by the Advice of the Princes and Lords of his Empire, marries another Wife.

THE princes and principal senators of his empire then thought it necessary to persuade the

emperor to a second marriage, that the empire might not be without an heir, in case the young prince should die; and upon their humble representations the emperor condescended; and after some time he was married to the daughter of the King of Castile, who was reputed to be accomplished with all princely endowments.

This new empress behaved herself so well at first, that the emperor forgot all the sorrow he had been under for the death of his first wife; and after they had lived some years without issue, the empress hearing that the emperor had a son by his former wife, who was fair and beautiful, she fell in love with him, though unseen, and began to consider how to have him sent for home, in order to bring him to her lascivious appetite.

One night, as the emperor lay in his bed, he being more than ordinarily open in declaring the secrets of his heart, and his affections to his lady, she took that opportunity to press the matter to him, and desired him, as a mark of his love, not to deny her one favour.

The emperor answered, that he would deny her nothing that was possible for him to perform. Whereupon the empress said, 'My dear lord, you now I have no child by you; but my joy is this; we have a son, who is under tutorage of Seven Wise Masters; him I desire to have as my own son; and to that end, I beseech you to send for him, that I may have the consolation of his presence, and by my respect to him shew my love for your majesty.'

The emperor well pleased with this request, embraced the empress, and replied, 'I have often had it in my thoughts to do as you advise me, and is now sixteen years since I saw him, therefore
your

your will shall be joyfully fulfilled. And the next morning a messenger was accordingly dispatched to the Seven Wise Masters, with orders, that they should bring the prince home at the feast of Pentecost following.

The Wise Masters consult the Stars, to know whether it was proper to obey the Emperor's Command.



THE masters having understood the emperor's pleasure, in the evening retired into the garden and taking a view of the heavens, they perceived by one star, that the prince's journey to court would prove fatal; and yet, by another little star, they saw that if they did not conduct him to the emperor at the time prefixed, they should lose their heads.

And as they were sorrowfully deliberating what was best to be done, the young prince came unto them, and demanded the cause of their concern: they answered, 'Sir we have received orders from your father to conduct you home at the feast of Pentecost; whereupon we have consulted the stars, and find, that if, at the time prefixed, we do obey the emperor, it will endanger both your life and ours; and yet by another star we see, that we shall lose our heads if we do not obey.' Then the prince said, 'let me also behold the firmament.'

And when he had formed a scheme, and considered the configuration of the planets, and the heavenly aspects, he told them that he perceived by a little star, that if he could abstain from speaking seven days, he should save his own life and theirs also.

'Now,' said the prince, 'you are Seven Masters, so well accomplished in oratory and rhetoric, that it is an easy matter for you, by your wisdom, to save my life for seven days, and on the eighth day I shall speak for myself, and save my life and yours likewise.'

The masters then, by diligent inspection, perceived their scholar was in the right; and admired his wisdom and knowledge, which was much greater than their own; returning thanks to the Almighty for prospering their endeavours, which redounded not only to their own honour and advantage, but also to the glory and happiness of the Roman Empire.

The masters then, whose names were Pontillas, Dentulus, Craton, Malquedrake, Josephus, Cleophes, and Solon, respectfully undertook, each man his day, to intercede in behalf of the prince, and plead for the preservation of his life, according to his own proposal and request.

The

*The Emperor meets his Son with great Solemnity,
Pomp, and Triumph.*



THE emperor being informed that his son was upon the road, commanded his princes and nobles to attend upon him in their proper habits and ornaments; and the masters likewise understanding the coming of the emperor, said to the young prince, 'It is best for us to leave your highness to go privately into the city, and consult how we may act best for your service.'

The prince answered only by a nod, signifying, that his dependence was upon Providence, in the desperate trial he was to undergo. And so they took their leaves of him, and went a private way to the city, leaving with him his attendants, to pursue his journey towards the court.

And when he was come within sight of the magnificent City of Rome, he espied the emperor, attended

THE SEVEN WISE MASTERS.

By all his nobles; whereupon the prince made his obeisance with all manner of respect and duty, but spoke not a word; which the emperor imputing unto bashfulness, having joyfully embraced him, ordered him to ride on his right hand, and shewing him the magnificent attendance of princes and noble lords, he asked his opinion of the grandeur and majesty of his court and empire, expecting a pertinent answer, according to the great wisdom he was reputed to be endowed with.

But the prince remembering the silence that he was to keep, to avoid the malignity of the planets, answered not one word, which the emperor and nobles wondered at, expecting that every word he should say would be a sentence.

The empress hearing that the young prince was come, apparelled herself very richly, and going into the hall with her retinue, sat down by him, and asked the emperor, if this was his son, that was educated by the Seven Wise Masters? he replied, it was his son; but, to his great surprize, he answered nothing to all the questions he asked of him.

The empress said, that his silence must be imputed to some unaccountable cause, which she would undertake to discover and remedy, if the prince might be permitted to retire with her into some private apartment, without any attendants.

The emperor, little thinking that what the empress said was owing to a lawless passion, but believing that she made this proposal out of good will, presently commanded the prince to attend upon the empress into her own apartment.

The Empress strives to ensnare the Prince; he rejects all her Temptations; she cries out for Help, pretending he would have ravished her.

THE lascivious empress, without losing one moment after she was come into her chamber, shut the door, and then taking the prince by the hand, she made him sit down by her on the bedside



and said, ' My beloved prince, I have heard much of your wit and beauty, and now am glad to see that which my heart so much delighted in; it was I that caused your father to send for you, that I might enjoy you; and now let me tell you, that for your sake I have kept my virginity to this day; therefore let us lie down together and enjoy one another.'

These, and many other such like enticements, the empress used; but was not able to move the integrity of the prince, nor provoke him to answer one word;

word; whereupon the empress said, 'Why do you not speak to me? O dear prince! thou object of my best affection, speak to me: if you have resolved to be silent to all others, methinks you might speak to me. What do you fear? remove all fear, and tell me the cause of your silence, and let me alone to excuse you. Speak, my dear. Why are you so cruel? If you are young, I for my part am in the flower of my age; and if you are fair, there is not a lady in Rome that can equal me for beauty. Why do you not remove your eyes from the ground? Look upon me, my prince.'

Having said this, she embraced him in a very ardent manner, and said, 'I beg of you, my dear, to speak at least one word, let it be what it will. Do not despise me, who am ready to die for you: I lose my speech; alas, my heart fails me; behold me at your feet imploring your love! What steel, rock, or marble so hard, as would not be softened with these intreaties! I, who once thought I could mollify the most savage and cruel of all the universe, must now find myself slighted by you!'

The prince remaining silent and immoveable, the empress brought him pen, ink, and paper, and said, 'O my dear prince! if you please not to consent to me by speech, behold here is pen, ink, and paper; write, and let me know, whether I may hereafter depend upon your love.'

Then taking the pen, he wrote as follows—

"O lady, God forbid that I should defile a vessel consecrated to my father's use; in doing which I should greatly sin against the Almighty, and also the malediction of my father; therefore, from henceforth desist, I beseech you, from tempting me to such incestuous wickedness."

When the empress, had read the writing, filled with rage and malice, she tore it with her teeth, rent her cloaths and head attire, and scratched her face, crying out with a loud voice, Help! help! my lords, help me! lest this lewd and wicked traitor ravish me.

The Empress accuseth the Prince of endeavouring to commit Incest with her.

THE emperor being in the hall, and hearing the empress cry out so violently, ran towards her chamber, with many of his nobles following him, to know what was the matter: to whom the empress cried, 'O my lord, do me justice! behold this traitorous son of yours, the most debauched that ever sin and heat put strength into; see the fruits of the good doctrine which the traitor hath learned, not to vouchsafe to answer the least word to the questions you demanded of him, and yet, without shame, to ask that of me, which is not lawful to think or speak of; and because I would not consent, he has made my face all bloody, torn my vesture, and the ornaments of my head, and if you had not come in, as you did, he had forced me to his wicked and libidinous appetite.

When the emperor heard this, filled with rage, he caused council immediately to be called, and being seated on his throne, he passed sentence of death upon his son; commanding, that within three hours he should be put to the most cruel and ignominious death that could be imagined.

The lords and nobles hearing that sentence of death was, passed upon the prince, told the emperor that

that the law was ordained for transgressors; and that if the prince must be put to death, it ought to be done according to form of law, lest it should be said that the emperor in his wrath, without law or justice, had put to death his only son.

The emperor approving of this advice, commanded him to be put in prison till judgment was legally given against him.

First Example of the Empress.

WHEN the empress understood that the prince was not put to death, she retired into her apartment very disconsolate; and when night came, the emperor entering the chamber, found her full of grief; to whom he said, 'My dear lady, what is it that makes you so uneasy?' she answered, 'You see how your accursed son hath dishonoured me, and though you pronounced sentence of death upon him, yet it is not executed, and he still lives to be a reproach upon my honour and virtue.'

The emperor replied, 'Leave off this immoderate trouble: I will surely revenge your cause; and tomorrow he shall die by the law.'

Then said she, 'Must he live so long? It may perhaps happen to you as it did to a burgess in Rome, who had a tree of great virtue' — 'What tree was that,' said the emperor, 'and what happened about it?' to which the empress replied as follows:

'In the City of Rome lived a burgess, who in his garden had a tree that every year brought forth fruit of such extraordinary virtue, that whosoever eat thereof, was cured of all maladies or diseases. It happened that from the root of the tree sprung a
B 3 sucker

sucker so beautiful, that the gentleman was much delighted with it; hoping, in process of time, that it would become as useful as the old one. The tree grew well at first; but being grown up to a pretty height, the branches of the old tree kept the sun from it, so that it did not thrive; which the gentleman observing, asked the gardener the reason thereof; who answered, that the boughs of the great tree kept the sun and air from it, whereupon the burgess ordered him to lop off the branches of the old one; which the gardener accordingly performed.

Another time the burgess seeing the young plant, and perceiving that still it did not thrive, said to the gardener, 'What hinders its growth now?' He replied, 'I suppose the height of the old tree shades it from the sun and rain, and therefore it cannot grow.' Then, said the master 'hew down the old tree to the ground; for of this sucker I hope to have a better tree than ever that was.' This the gardener immediately executed; but no sooner was the old tree hewed down, than the young plant, wanting natural moisture and nutriment, which it drew from the old one, utterly perished: and thus was this tree, which had been of such excellent use and virtue, entirely destroyed, for which the burgess and his advisers gained the curse of all the poor, who, by the benefit of this tree, were constantly cured of their diseases.'

M O R A L.

'This tree, my lord,' said she, 'is an emblem of your noble person, by whose justice and bounty many poor, sick, and blind people are much comforted and restored; and the young sucker, or plant, which grew under the great tree, is your accursed son,

son, who studies how he may lop off the boughs and arms of your might, and insinuate himself into the favour of the people; and then most unnaturally and wickedly imagines to destroy your sacred life, to make room for himself to reign. But what shall be the consequence? all poor and feeble persons shall curse them, who might have destroyed your son, and did not do it. Therefore I advise you, while you have the power in your own hands, to put him to death, lest the curses of the people fall upon you.

Then said the emperor, 'Your counsel is very good, and tomorrow my son shall surely die.'

Accordingly the next day the emperor sat in judgment, and commanded his officers to lead the prince to execution, with trumpets sounding before him, in token of death.

Example of the First Master.

THE sun was hardly risen next morning, when those to whom the execution of the prince was committed, had provided all things necessary.

Whereupon Pontillas, the first master, came and spoke to the officer to delay the execution, for that he hoped, by the grace of God, to deliver the prince from death; and then hastened to the palace, and going before the emperor, begged to be heard what he had to say in behalf of the prince.

The emperor answered and said, 'I delivered my son to you to be well educated, and now you have brought him home dumb, and so lewd, that he has endeavoured to defile his father's bed; therefore assure yourselves that he shall die first, and you shall none of you long survive him.'

Pontillas

Pontillas replied, 'My lord, your majesty, I hope, will do nothing rashly, or unworthy your great prudence. It is incredible to me, that the prince would have ravished the empress, for I must assure your majesty, that for the sixteen years which he has been amongst us, we never perceived any thing but virtue and innocence in all his actions; and therefore, I beseech you not to execute your only son, barely for the accusation of a woman, lest it should happen to you worse than it did to a knight, who, through the words of his wife, killed his good greyhound, that saved the life of his son.'

The emperor desiring to hear the story, Pontillas answered, that he was ready to obey his majesty provided he would recal his son, and defer his execution till the next day. To which the emperor assenting, Pontillas began as follows:

In Rome there lived a gentleman that had but one son, who was carefully nursed in his own house. He had also a greyhound, so good, that he never ran at any game but he took it; besides some other extraordinary qualities, that his master much admired him for

It happened one day that there was a tilt and tournament in the public place appointed for that purpose, to which this gentleman, amongst others, resorted; and no sooner was he gone, but his lady, with her maidens also, went to see it; the nurse also, to satisfy her curiosity, went privately, and left the child lying in the cradle in the hall, and the greyhound in the room.

The gentleman's house being out of repair, in the very room where the child was, issued out of a hole a great and horrible serpent, which approaching the cradle to slay the child, the greyhound perceived it, and flew at the serpent to preserve the child; and so
furious

furious was the engagement, that the cradle was overturned, with the child in it, but without any harm to the child, because the cloaths fell underneath, and the cradle stood on the four pummels.

The dog being enraged at the wounds he received of the serpent, fell with redoubled fury upon it, and at last tearing the serpent, he was all besmeared with his blood; and then he laid himself down in his place and licked his wounds.

Not long after this, the tilting being ended, the nurse came into the chamber, and saw the cradle turned upside down, compassed round about with blood, and the greyhound likewise all bloody; and without looking any further, tore her cloaths, and with outrageous cries, carried the sad news to her lady, that the greyhound had slain the child.

Hereupon the mother, full of despair and grief for the loss of her only son, likewise rent her cloaths, and broke out into dismal exclamations; and her maidens who had accompanied her, adding to the lamentation, made the whole house ring; and yet, not any of them had the wit to go and turn the cradle up to see what had happened, continuing their outcries till the gentleman returned from the tournament; to whom the lady, with tears, related what she had imagined by the nurse's discourse.

The knight hearing these sad tidings, full of rage and grief went into the hall, where meeting the poor greyhound, who came fawning upon him as he used to do, and seeing him all bloody, he immediately concluded that all they had told him was true; and drawing out his sword, he ran him quite through the windpipe and neck, so that the poor dog fell down dead at the feet of his mistaken master. No sooner had the angry knight done this, but he went and took up the cradle, and there he found his son alive and

and well, and seeing then the slaughtered serpent, which nobody had minded before, he perceived the greyhound had killed the serpent in defence of the child: whereupon, being full of grief, he sorrowfully cried out, 'Ah! poor dog! that thy friendship and loyalty should be so unfortunate to thee, to cause thy death, instead of recompence, which thou didst deserve for preserving my little child.'

And saying this, he broke his sword in pieces, and went towards the Holy Land, and abode there all the days of his life; and all this was occasioned by giving too much credit to the words of a rash woman.

M O R A L.

Pontillas, having thus ended his example, said, 'The moral or application of what has been said, my lord, is, that this will be your case if you give credit to your wife; and therefore, as your majesty's dutiful subject, I humbly advise you not to be swayed by prejudice or passion, but let the cause be examined into; for if the gentleman had but enquired into the matter deliberately, he had not killed his greyhound for the report of his wife.'

The emperor gave such attention to the example and advice of the philosopher, that he put a stop to the execution of the prince until further orders: and thus was the prince preserved the first day.

Second Example of the Empress.

WHEN the empress understood that the prince was reprieved from execution, she went to the emperor, weeping bitterly, complaining that he shewed

shewed the little esteem he had for her honour, by retarding justice; and that he would be convinced of his error when it would be too late, because he gave ear to the flattery and deceit of the philosophers, which would certainly be his ruin; as it happened to a wild boar, who was destroyed by the flattery of a herdsman, or shepherd.

The emperor desiring to hear the example, the empress replied, 'I shewed you one before, but see no effect it had; nevertheless, I will obey you again, and relate this example to you.' And so saying, she began as follows:

In the spacious forest of Ardennes was a wild boar, so fierce that he devoured many people; whereupon the king caused a proclamation to be published throughout his dominions, that whoever could slay the boar should have his only daughter in marriage, and, after his decease, his kingdom.

Notwithstanding this great reward, it was a long time before any man was found who had courage enough to encounter the boar. But at last a shepherd, or herdsman, undertook the task, encouraging himself, that if he happened to die in the engagement, there was an end to a troublesome life; but if he succeeded, he should raise himself and his family to great riches and grandeur.

Being fired with these thoughts and resolutions, he took his shepherd's staff and went to the forest; but no sooner he entered therein, but the boar espied him; and running directly towards him, the shepherd, to avoid his fury, climbed up into a tree. The boar, enraged that he could not come at him, began to gnaw the tree with his tusks in so violent a manner, that the shepherd trembled, being afraid that he would have overthrown it; but it luckily happened that the tree being loaded with fruit, the shepherd gathered

gathered some of it, and threw it to the boar, who greedily devoured the same, and eat so much, that he quite gorged himself, and laid down under the tree in order to sleep.

The cunning shepherd watching his opportunity, descended the tree by little and little, and with one hand he clawed the boar, while with the other he held about the tree. The boar, pleased with being thus tickled, turned up his belly, and the shepherd continuing scratching of him he fell asleep. Then the shepherd, resolving to make sure work, drew out his knife, and cut his throat; and afterwards cutting off his head, he carried it to the king, who, according to his promise, gave him his only daughter, in whose right, after his decease, he was made king.

M O R A L.

Then said the empress, 'The mighty boar is an emblem of your mighty person, whom no man by force and open strength can withstand; the shepherd with his staff, represents your wicked son, who, with the staff of cunning, already begins to plot against your honour and dignity. As the herdsman tickled the boar asleep, and then killed him, so the masters of your son tickle your fancy with fables and flattery, till at last they will take away your life, that your wicked son may reign.'

The emperor replied, 'God forbid that they should serve me as the shepherd served the wild boar; therefore, to prevent it, my son shall certainly die tomorrow.' At this the empress departed very joyfully and well contented.

Example

Example of the Second Master.

THE second master, named Lentulus, hearing that the emperor had ordered his son to be executed, immediately hastened to him, and said, 'My gracious lord, if you put your son to death for the words of your Wife, it will happen to you as it did to a certain knight, who, by the treachery of his wife, was unjustly set upon the pillory.'

The emperor being desirous to hear that example, Lentulus insisted that a stop should be first put to the execution of the execution of the prince; to which the emperor consenting, he began thus.

In the famous City of Mantua lived an ancient knight, who married a beautiful young wife, whom he loved above all earthly things; but lest his age, not concurring with the expectation of her youth, should incline her to incontinence, and encourage her in a lawless flame, he was not wanting to do all in his power to confine her within his house; and every night he locked the gates with his own hands, and secured the keys under his bed head.

But notwithstanding all the precaution and care of the old knight, his young wife found means to meet her gallant, by taking the keys from under his bed's head when he was fast asleep, and opening the door went to her paramour; and when she returned, laying the keys where she found them, silently crept into bed to her husband.

But after she had frequently thus pursued her unlawful amours without being discovered, at last her husband happened to awake, when she was going to prosecute her accustomed delight; and missing his wife, he felt for the keys; but not finding them, he got up, and went to the door, which he found only on the lock; and then bolting it, he returned to his
C chamber,

chamber, and looked out of the window to see what time she returned.

Now we must observe that in the same city was a law, that at a certain hour in the night a bell was rung, after which, if either man or woman was found in the streets, they were detained in prison till the next morning, and then put into the pillory, as objects of shame and derision unto all beholders.

When it was very late, or rather early, his wife came from her gallant, but found the door bolted against her; however, she took the boldness to knock. The good old knight looking out at the window, and seeing it was his wife, reproached her in the following manner: 'O thou wicked and unchaste woman! said he, have I found thee but, how often may I conclude thou hast committed adultery, and defiled thy marriage bed? assure thyself, lascivious creature, that thou shalt stand there till the ringing of the bell, that the watch may seize thee, and thou mayest meet with the punishment due to thy abominable perfidiousness and adultery.'

She answered in an humble, dissembling tone, 'Why does my dear lord and husband thus unjustly charge me with a wicked crime, which my known chastity abhors from my soul: God is my witness, I am innocent of this grievous accusation: for if you will know the truth, I was sent for by my mother, who was taken dangerously ill, and you being fast asleep, I was loth to awake you; and so with all possible silence I arose, and taking the keys, I opened the door, and went (as my duty obliged me) to my sick mother, whom I found so very ill, that I fear she cannot live till morning; but for all that, my affection is so great to you that I came away, and left a dying mother, to return to a dear and loving husband; wherefore, I beseech you, let me in, and

do not, for my great affection to you, expose me to shame and disgrace.'

These plausible pretences did not prevail upon the old knight, who justly looked upon her as guilty of adultery and falshood, and therefore he absolutely refused to let her in. Hereupon she reminded him what a disgrace it would be were she taken by the watch, not only to herself but to him, and all their relations; but finding all her prayers to no purpose, and that he remained inexorable, she bethought herself of a stratagem, which she prosecuted after the following manner:

'My lord,' said she, 'you know that by this door there is a well; if you let me not in, I will drown myself, to avoid the shame that is coming upon me and my friends.'

As the old gentleman was about to reprove her further, and to threaten her, in hopes to deter her thereby from the like practices for the future, and then intending to let her in, and out of his great love to forgive her, the moon went down, and the night was obscured with a darkness more than usual. Overjoyed at this advantage, she pursued her stratagem, and with an audible voice, and a dismal tone, she thus expressed herself:

'That I may die like a Christian, I will make my last will; and first, I bequeath my soul to heaven, and my body to the earth; but all other worldly goods whatever I bequeath to my dear husband, for him to dispose of as he shall think convenient.

Having thus finished her pretended will, she went to the well, and there finding a great stone, she took it in her arms, and crying out, 'Now I drown myself!' she threw the stone into the well, squealing after it very artfully, to make her husband the more

readily believe it was her. This done, she stepped softly, and hid herself behind the door again.

Her stratagem had its desired effect; for the good old knight, verily believing that his wife had been as good as her word, ran hastily down to the well, making a lamentable outcry all the way from his great tenderness to her.

Now observe the perfidiousness and crafty contrivance of this wicked woman, to turn the tables upon her indulgent husband; for though she had injured him in the highest degree imaginable, yet now she makes him suffer publicly for her scandalous crimes; and instead of reparation to his abused honour, she, by the falsest accusations and wickedness, procures him to be punished in the pillory, as a debauched person, for her adulteries; and thereby at once clear herself, be revenged on her innocent husband for threatening her before, and all this at the price of his reputation and good name.

The old knight was no sooner out, but she got in, and having locked the doors, looked out of the window, as he had done before; and having a long while heard the good old man grievously lament for her supposed loss, and condemning himself for too much rigour, laughing all the time at him for his indulgence and love, she at last, in opprobrious terms, called out to him, in the vilest manner imaginable, calling him lecherous dotard, and upbraiding him with slighting her, and going continually out on nights after harlots.

The good old man was so overjoyed to hear his wife was alive, that he valued not what she said; and desiring her to have a better opinion of him, he begged her to open the door, and, passing by all, they would be good friends.

But all his prayers and intreaties availed nothing, she vowed he should stay till the watch came, that

he might deservedly suffer, as he had threatened her before. The knight, in his own vindication, pleaded that it was an improbable thing that he should be guilty of such vices at his advanced years, alledging further, that out of pure affection to her, he was now in the street; and therefore desired her not to let him suffer shamefully.

She confidently answered, that it was God's goodness that he had given him time to repent; and therefore he ought to suffer patiently.

The knight replied, 'That God was merciful, and required nothing more of a sinner than that he should repent of his sins past and amend his life; therefore, 'dear wife,' said he, 'I beg of you to let me in.'

She said, 'Who the devil made you so good a preacher? but for all that, you come not in here.' And as he was studying some new persuasions to prevail upon her to let him in, the watch came, and finding him in the street, demanded what he did there at that unseasonable time of night? reminding him withal, that he had broke the law of the city, and though he was an ancient inhabitant thereof, that could not excuse him from suffering according to the nature of the offence.

His wife, hearing these words, cried out to the watchmen, 'Now is the time, honest men, for you to avenge me on that foul adulterer, who is so intemperate in lust, that he never fails at night to forsake my bed, and follow his strumpets. In hopes of reformation, I have patiently forborn him a great while; but nothing will reclaim him, slighting my youth, and continuing still in his wicked whoredoms; therefore now punish him according to his deserts, that he may be made an example to all such dotards as he is. Accordingly he was carried



to prison, and he, next morning, shamefully stood in the pillory.'

M O R A L,

'Now,' said the master to the emperor, 'have you minded well the story?' and he said 'Yes. Then,' said the master, 'if you execute your son, through the instigation of your wife, your condition may prove more unfortunate than the knight's.'

Whereupon the emperor condemned the baseness of the woman, and said, that, for that very cause, Dioclesian should not die. The master having applauded his resolution, and humbly thanked him for it, he departed.

The Third Example of the Empress.

WHEN the empress understood that the prince was not dead, she wept bitterly, and upbraided the emperor for the little love that he seemed to have for her, by giving heed to every fable of the Wise Masters; who, by their gilded expressions, tossed him to and fro, as chaff before the wind; asking if ever he read in any history, that the execution of a sentence, pronounced by the emperor himself, was retarded, as this is now. 'Yet, however,' said she, 'I will discharge my conscience, being assured, that in the end, you will find all my sayings were to preserve your life and honour; whereas others only aim at your utter ruin and destruction, as it happened to a treasurer in Egypt, who, by following the dictates of his son, both he and his wife died miserable.'

Then the emperor desired her to relate the story: she replied, 'I will my lord;' and accordingly began as follows:

In Rome there lived a knight, who took such pleasure in hunting, gaming, and profuse living, that he came to great poverty; and then he advised with his son what way they should take, whereby they might subsist, as formerly. The son, whose extravagances had been as great as his father's, told him he had thought on a way, if he would be ruled by him, by which their wants might be supplied: the knight was very desirous to be informed. 'The way,' said the son, is this—'The Emperor Octavian abounds in gold and silver, which is piled up in a great tower; let us contrive how to come at it, by breaking through the wall.' This pleased the father, who said, 'I like this project very well;' and to that end, having prepared instruments, he and his son entered
one

one night into the tower where the treasure lay, and having loaded themselves with gold and silver, returned through the whole; and stopping it up, made the earth plain as it was before, to prevent it being discovered; then they returned home, living as profusely as ever, resolving to take the same course again, if they heard no noise of their robbery.

Now, the keeper of the tower at last missed the treasure, and looking diligently about, perceived the hole that was made through the wall; whereupon he began to consider if it were possible to entrap the thieves; and for that purpose he made a great cauldron, and filled it full of pitch, and such like stuff, and placed it at the hole, so that no man could come in at the hole, but he must unavoidably fall into the cauldron, and it would forcibly retain him.

Now, it was not long ere the knight and his son had spent all their gold and silver, and hearing no noise about the robbery, concluded to carry away more money; and so, on a night very dark, entered as before, and the father entering first into the hole, fell into the vessel up to the neck, and was so fastened that he could not stir; so concluding it was a plot for his surprize, advised his son to beware, lest he should be caught too. 'What must be done then,' said the son, 'to get you out?'

The father replied, 'Son, for the safeguard of our honour, cut off my head, so that they may not know my body, and our family be defamed.' The son considering, that of two evils, the least was to be chosen, severed his head from his body, and interred it privately; then returned home, and related the whole matter; beseeching his mother and sisters to forbear crying, for that would be a means of discovering it to the world.

The next day the treasurer went to the treasury, and finding in his trap a body without a head, was

amazed, and went and told the king all that had passed. Upon which it was concluded, that the body should be tied to a horse's tail, and drawn through the streets of the city, and at every house the cryer should proclaim, 'This is the body of the thief which robbed the king's treasury;' and if they heard any weep, they might conclude he belonged to that house.

The king's servants did so, and at length they came against the house of its abode; at the sight whereof the mother and daughters could not refrain weeping; whereupon an officer ran into the house, and demanded the cause of their weeping. The villainous son, who was very subtil, took up suddenly a hatchet, and therewith in an instant wounded his mother in the leg; and then replied, 'Our lamentation is occasioned by our mother's being so dangerously wounded by a mischance.' The officer upon this suspected nothing, but answered, that they had better endeavour to help her, than cry and lament for her; so took his leave. In a short time after the wound festered, and threw the mother into a fever, which deprived her of life, so the villainous son, with his own hands, killed both father and mother.'

M O R A L

Then, said the empress, 'God grant the like do not befall you; for I am afraid you will be reduced to the same danger that this knight fell into: the knight followed the evil counsel of his son, so lost his honour and his life. The knight's son slew his father and mother, and I fear Dioclesian will do the same by you, and we shall be in danger of life and honour, unless you open the eyes of your understanding, which I heartily move you to, for the preservation of the imperial crown and dignity.'

The emperor said, 'You have given me a good example, and I shall take care to prevent him serving us as the wicked son served his father and mother; and therefore, to-morrow my son shall die.'



The Example of the Third Master.

CRATON, the third master, hearing that the prince was ordered to be executed in great haste came before the emperor, and made his reverence to him. The emperor, being angry, demanded how he durst appear before him, and, in an ironical manner, said, 'Is this the rare doctrine you have taught my son, to solicit his mother-in-law to debauchery, and to attempt to force her?'

The philosopher answered, that as to his being lewd, he could not believe it; and therefore desired his majesty to consider, that there was no malice comparable to a woman's, as he could prove by a good example of a burgess, who killed his magpie through the deceit of his wife.

The emperor desiring to hear the story, having suspended the death of his son, Craton related it in the following manner:

'There lived, in a certain city of Rome, a rich burgess, who had a magpie, which he loved so well, that he taught her to speak, so that she might tell him all that she saw and heard.

This burgess was married to a young wife, more beautiful than honest; he loved her well; but she requited him with slight and disrespect, and made choice of a gallant in her husband's absence to gratify her lustful appetite; which the magpie observing, told her master at his coming home; so that the report thereof spread itself through the whole city.

Her husband thereupon upbraided her with adultery; to which she said, she was innocent, and that he was to blame to believe his magpie; and that as long as he continued so to do, there would be nothing but discord betwixt them. But he replied, that the magpie saw and heard what she told him; and therefore he would believe her rather than his wife. It happened not long after, that this burgess travelled abroad, and was no sooner gone but she sent to her friend to come secretly to her that night, as he was accustomed. Being come, as he entered into the house, he said, 'Dearest, I am afraid the magpie will discover us!' but she bid him not fear, for it was dark, and he could not see them. The magpie hearing this, said, 'It is true, I see you not, but I can hear you; which I shall tell my master when he comes home.' At which the lusty young man was startled; but she bid him be of good courage, and she would be revenged on the magpie. So they lay together till about midnight, at which time the adulteress arose, and calling her maid servant, commanded her to fetch a ladder, which they set up to the roof of the house, and then made a hole therein, just over the magpie, through which they cast down water, gravel, small stones, and the like; insomuch that the poor magpie was almost killed.

Upon the burgess's return, he went to visit his magpie, asking how she fared in his absence; the magpie replied, 'Master, I shall satisfy you in both.' 'First, I have the old news to tell you, that is, that you are a cuckold; for the very night after your departure your wife entertained a young man all night in bed with her, notwithstanding I told them I would inform you thereof. As to my welfare, that very night I had like to have died, it was so tempestuous,

tuous, either raining, hailing, or snowing all the night.'

The wife hearing this, said to her husband, 'You have hitherto believed in the magpie; now, she saith, she had like to have died with rain, hail, and snow, that night she accused me of adultery, whereas there was never any thing clearer, but my innocence.'—The good man, to be satisfied of the truth, enquired of the neighbours, whether that night was fair or foul? who all affirmed no night could be fairer.—Then going to his wife, he acknowledged the fault of his cruelty, and after that went to the magpie, and having railed at her for sowing discord between man and wife, he wrung her neck off; the wife at the sight thereof was overjoyed; and when he had killed the magpie, he looked up and saw a ladder, and a vessel of water, sand, and stones, which made him soon perceive the treachery of his wife; at which he grew so troubled, that for the words of his wife he had killed the magpie, that he sold off all he had, and went on pilgrimage.

M O R A L.

'Now,' said the master to the emperor, 'was not this a false and wicked woman, who by her deceit caused the magpie to be slain?' The emperor answered, 'It is very true, and I pity the poor magpie that she should die for her fidelity; and for the sake of this example my son shall not die.' The master commending the prudence of the emperor, took his leave; having first recommended him to the protection of the Almighty.

The Fourth Example of the Empress.

WHEN the Empress heard that the prince was not dead, she fretted like one bereft of her senses; whereupon the emperor demanded the cause of her lamentation. 'My lord,' said she, 'you cannot be ignorant of the cause, knowing how I have been abused by your son, as is still visible by the bloody marks upon my tender flesh; and you promised me, that he should die for my own sake, but more for your's, fearing that you will be reduced to the same condition of a certain emperor in Rome, who was blind hearkening to Seven Wise Masters.'

Then said the emperor, 'My dear lady, shew me that example, that it might be a caution to me; for though I gave one day's respite to my son, it does not follow that I gave him his life.' She said, then she would gladly tell him that story for this caution, and began as followeth:

There was in the City of Rome Seven Wise Masters, who chiefly governed the empire; and perceiving the emperor never acted any thing without their advice, ordered it so by their art, that the emperor should see, whilst he was in his palace, but when he went out of it, he should be blind, and by this means they enriched themselves much.

Now when they had wrought this experiment, they could never dissolve it afterwards; but the emperor continued blind when he went out of his palace.

Another way they had to enrich themselves: they proclaimed throughout the empire, that they could interpret dreams, or resolve any difficult question off hand, requiring a guinea for their pains; by which means they grew richer than the emperor himself.

One day as the emperor sat with the empress, he began to sigh, which she perceiving, demanded the cause; the emperor said, 'It is grief to me that I have been so long blind, when I am out of my palace, and can find no remedy.'

The empress said, 'My lord take my advice, I beseech you, which is this: in your court you have Seven Wise Masters, who govern you and the empire, and I verily believe are the cause of your blindness; and if so, they deserve to die a most shameful death; therefore, first tell them your infirmity, and threaten them, upon pain of death, that they find out a speedy remedy for your blindness.'

Accordingly the emperor sent for the masters, and charged them, on pain of death, to find a remedy to restore his sight; they desired fifteen days to give an answer, the emperor granted it; then they consulted; but not being able to effect it, they resolved to seek throughout the kingdom for a remedy; and as they were passing along the city, they espied some children playing; and looking upon them, a man came hastily after them with a guinea in gold and said, 'Good masters, I desire you tell me the meaning of a dream I had last night.'

One of the children, whose name was Merlin, hearing this, said to him, 'I will expound your dream without taking any of your gold, and also tell you your dream without first acquainting me with it.' Last night you dreamed, that sitting in your cellar, you became so dry, that all the drink in your house could not quench your thirst; whereupon a fountain did arise in the middle of the cellar, of the fairest water that ever eye beheld, and when you had tasted of it, your thirst was quenched, and then you caused all your family to drink, who, like you, received the greatest content imaginable.

'Now

'Now the interpretation,' said Merlin, is this: 'Turn home quickly, and dig in the place where you thought the water sprung; and there you shall find a great quantity of silver, whereby your family shall be very rich.'—The man did so, and found a vast quantity of gold, according to the saying of young Merlin. The man offered him much of the treasure, but he would not take any thing thereof.

When the Seven Wise Masters saw this, they stood in admiration, and said, 'Child, we see such wisdom in you, that we desire your advice in a matter of great importance.'—He desiring to know what it was, they said, 'The Emperor of Rome, as long as he is in his palace hath his sight, but as soon as he is out of the palace he is quite blind; and, if you can restore him, the emperor will heap great rewards upon you.'—The child answered, 'I know the cause, and how to remedy it.'

They desired that he would go with them to the emperor: the child went; and when they came before the emperor, they said, 'My lord, we have brought a child, who can tell you the cause of your blindness, and also how you shall recover your sight.'

The emperor turning to the child, said, 'Will you tell me the cause of my blindness, and the remedy?'—the child answered, 'My lord, if you will lead me to your bed-chamber, I will tell you.'—and when he was there, he ordered the bed on which the emperor slept to be removed, and then said, he should see wonders. That done, they saw a well smoking, that was fed by seven springs, which much surprized the emperor.

The child said, 'You see this well, and without it be dried up, your majesty will never recover your sight.'—The emperor said, 'Child, how can this be done?'—he answered, 'Sir, there is but one way

40. THE SEVEN WISE MASTERS.

to do it.'—The emperor said, 'Tell us the means, and if possible it shall be done.'—The child replied, 'My lord, the seven springs of the well, are emblems of the Seven Wise Masters, who hitherto have tyrannized over you, and have made you blind when you are out of your palace, that they might oppress your subjects, and you not see it. But, though they have found out the means of blinding you, they know not how to remedy it; therefore follow my advice, and you shall see this well extinct and dried up, and you shall have your sight as you had before.'

Then he ordered the emperor to send for one of the masters, pretending to confer with him about what Merlin had told him; and when he was come, he commanded his head presently to be cut off, and one spring upon this quickly disappeared; and then he ordered the rest, one by one, to be sent for, and be beheaded, and all the springs, with the well, entirely vanished, and the emperor was restored to his sight as at the first; for which great cure he made the child a lord, and gave him great possessions.

Then said the empress, 'My lord, have you minded what I said?' the emperor said, very well.

M O R A L.

Then said the empress, 'Sir, you want a Merlin, to shew you the abuse of your Seven Wise Masters, who study to take away your sight, that you may not be able to judge of things that you have seen with both your eyes: and in order to this, they will persuade you that the villainous actions that Dioclesian has done, ought not to be punished, but rewarded; by which, if you suffer yourself thus to be imposed upon, they will in time take away your life, as they have already deprived you of the eyes of your understanding,

understanding, that they may exercise their tyranny on the poor Roman Empire.

'I shall prevent that,' said the emperor; 'for to-morrow morning justice shall take place, not only upon my son, but also upon his masters.'

Example of the Fourth Master.

THE emperor next morning commanded, without further delay, the sentence to be put in execution; whereupon the fourth master, named Marquedrake, came before the emperor; when the emperor chid him severely, saying, that it was through their evil persuasions that his son would have committed incest with his wife, and therefore they, and the villain his son, shall surely die.

'My lord,' said the master, 'you say that your son would have committed lewdness with your wife, but that is not proved to be true, therefore you ought not to condemn your son to die for the words of a simple woman, lest it happen to you worse than did to a certain old knight, that married a young lady that was full of bad blood.'

'Pray who was that knight and lady, and how runs the story?' said the emperor. The master, desiring a reprieve for Dioclesian whilst he told it, and the emperor granting it, he began as followeth:

There was an ancient knight, who was much importuned to marry; and at last he consented, and took to wife a Roman lady, both rich, young, and beautiful, and whom he loved entirely.

After some time, the mother paying her daughter a visit, asked her how she liked the married state? she answered, 'Not at all; for you have given me

an old man, fitter to be my father than my husband; and for my part I cannot help it, but I must needs love another.'—The mother said, 'Daughter, God forbid! how long have I been with your father, yet never had such a wicked thought.'—The daughter answered, 'That is no wonder; for you both met in your youth, and shared mutual felicities; but as for my husband, he is like an immoveable log, or senseless thing.'—The mother replied, 'If you love another, tell me who he is!'—The daughter answered, 'I will love a priest.'—The mother answered, 'It were less sin for you to love a knight, or squire.'—She said, 'In a while they will forsake me, and then publish my shame, and a priest will not; for he will be secret for his own honour, as well as mine; and spiritual men are more true to their lovers than laymen.'

Then said the mother, 'Daughter, pray take my advice; old folks are crafty and revengeful. It is true, there are some who will bear any thing: now I cannot judge of what complexion your husband is, therefore I think it necessary to try his patience before you proceed further.'—Then the daughter desired to know how she should prove it.—The mother answered, 'In his orchard he has a beautiful laurel tree, which he much admires; cause that to be cut down, and against his coming home make him a fire therewith; and if he easily forgive you, then love a priest.'—She thanked her mother for her advice, and promised to pursue it.

On the next day the knight went a hunting; and pursuant to her mother's advice, she ordered the gardener to cut down the laurel tree, that she might make a fire therewith to warm her lord withal when he came from hunting; the gardener replied, he durst not; because his master loved that tree more
than

than all the trees in the garden.—Whereupon the mistress being angry, gave him many hard speeches, and then taking a hatchet, she gave so many strokes, that she soon finished what she began: then the branches were made into faggots, and in the evening, against her lord came home, she made a great fire.

The knight, astonished to see fire made of a laurel tree, began to suspect some mischief to his admired tree, and said to the gardener, I hope this is not my beautiful tree I so much admired?—The gardener replied, 'My lord, it is.'—Whereupon he began to cry out, that he would sharply chastise those that had cut down his laurel.—His wife hearing threatenings, ran into the room, and said unto her husband, 'If you will be revenged, your vengeance must fall upon me, for I cut down the tree.'—'Why did you so?' said the gentleman.—She answered, 'My lord, knowing the weather is very sharp, and that you would be very cold when you came home, I did it to make you a comfortable fire; and this is the truth of the matter.'—'You have done very ill,' said the gentleman, 'and for the future take care how you disoblige me: you was furnished with other wood in the house: and if you had cut down all the trees in the garden, I should not have been so troubled as for this one laurel; but as it cannot be helped, we will say no more of it, but for the future take care.'

Thus was the knight's anger pacified, and she was very joyful to see things succeed so well, and longed for the hour of imparting it to her mother.

The next day, when the knight was gone to his diversion, away hastened the good wife to her mother, and told her how good-natured her husband had shewed himself, and how ready to forgive.

It

'It is very well,' said the mother; 'but though old men for one time forgive, they double the punishment another time; therefore I advise you to try him once more.'—'I already,' said the daughter, 'suffer so much for the love of the priest, that I no longer can contain myself; therefore, dear mother, I cannot obey you.'—The mother said, 'I charge you on my blessing, as well as the blessing of your father, that you try him once more, and then if you come off safe, you may love the priest.' After some pause, the daughter said, 'It is very troublesome to restrain, however, I am ready to obey you; and tell me how I shall prove him again?'

The mother answered, 'I know he has a little bitch that he much admires; take that bitch and kill her before his face, and if he forgive it lightly, then love the priest and welcome.'—The daughter replied, 'she would obey her this once;' so they parted, each going to their respective homes.

Not long after, this gentleman walking abroad, he took his bitch with him; his wife then cleaned the chamber, and, the better to adorn it, put a very rich covering upon the bed, and sat down by the fire, expecting her husband's return, who at his usual time came home; and the little bitch in a dirty pickle leaped upon the bed, and dirtied all the fair covering. Whereupon she took the little bitch by the hinder legs, and threw her against the wall with that violence, that she dashed her brains quite out. The knight, angry at this outrage, had like to have proceeded further than words.—'My lord,' said she, 'do you see the dirty pickle she has made our bed in, which I have so richly covered?'—The knight replied, that he valued his little bitch far above his bed, and which she very well knew.

Then

Then she began to weep in a piteous manner, expressing her sorrow that she had offended her husband, so that the gentleman began to be pacified; saying, 'I forgive you this time, but advise you for the future to take care how you offend.'

In the morning she went to her mother, pressing to let her enjoy the priest as she promised, seeing she had such certain proofs of her husband's patience.

The mother made as if she was glad, and said, 'Oh! my dear daughter, try him once more, and then I promise you, that if your husband continues in that temper, I will consent to your desire.'

The daughter answered, 'It is an inexpressible pain for me to abstain so long from the love of the priest; yet nevertheless, I will once more try my husband, if you will tell me how.'

The mother said, 'I know, on sunday next, he intends to have your father and I, and other friends to dine with him; and when all the dishes are on the table, fasten your keys at your girdle privately in the table-cloth, and pretending to have forgot something, arise hastily to fetch it, and by that means throw down the table, and all the dishes upon it; and if your husband easily forgive it, I solemnly declare I will never hinder your design again.'

The following sunday, as the mother said, she, her husband, and friends came to dinner, and the table being covered with variety of dishes, the young lady fastened her keys unto the table cloth privately, as she was directed, and all of a sudden pretending she had forgot something, and in her rising she pulled down the table, and all that was upon it.

The knight was troubled in his mind at this exploit, but wisely took no notice of it then, lest he should disturb the company; but caused the table to be

be taken up, and ordered other provisions to be brought; and the day past away in merriment, without thinking of any thing but pastime.

The next morning the knight went to a barber, and asked him if he was expert in letting of blood?—he answered, ‘Sir, I am acquainted with all the veins in a man’s body.’—The knight then desired him to go with him, and leading him to his lady’s chamber, he told her, that he had brought a man



to let her blood. — Alas!’ said she, ‘why must I bleed now, that never was bled in my life? besides, I am, I praise god, very well, and lusty.’—‘You are too lusty,’ said her husband, ‘and that makes you so wanton and light-headed, that every turn you play the fool to my displeasure and your own shame. Do you remember, that the other day, you hewed down the laurel; which I loved above all trees in my garden; a little while after, you killed my bitch, the pleasantest

THE SEVEN WISE MASTERS. 47

pleasantest beast I ever had in my house; and yesterday you threw down the table, to my great shame; and if I should suffer you to go on, the fourth offence would exceed all the rest; therefore, to cure you, I have brought this barber to do this office.'— Upon which she began to pray for forgiveness, and she would never more offend him.'—The knight told her, it was in vain to cry for mercy now; and that except she were submissive to his order he would have her heart's blood.'

And after he had bled her till she looked very pale, he bid the barber stop it, and then bled her in the other arm, which he did to that degree that she swooned away, and then he ordered the barber to stop it. And when she was come a little to herself again, he ordered her to be put to bed, and study for the future to amend her life, protesting the next fault should cost her her heart's blood.

Her maidens having put her to bed, she bid them send a messenger to her mother, to acquaint her, that she desired to speak to her before she died.— The mother guessing at what had happened, came quickly to her, and being entered into the chamber, the young lady very faintly said 'O mother, I am almost dead; for I have bled so much that I cannot live.'— 'Did not I tell you,' said the mother, 'that old men are subtle and cruel? will you now have the priest, I will go immediately for him?'—The young lady replied, in a very low tone, 'Do not tell me of the priest, all my fire is extinguished; it is no time now to speak of love, but think of giving me some cordial restorative.'

M O R A L.

'From this, sir,' said the master, 'I infer, that when women give way to inordinate desires, and

cannot be obliged to their satisfaction, revenge is their resentment; and further, this shews that good men will bear with small injuries, as the loss of a tree, a dog, or the like; but the cruelty is too great to deprive an emperor of his only son, whose innocence, I question not, will very soon appear, and those found culpable who design his ruin.

The emperor hearing this example, deferred the execution of his son; telling the master, that for the sake of the story, the prince should not die that day.

The Fifth Example of the Empress.

THE empress hearing the prince was not executed, immediately ordered her coaches to be got ready, as though she designed to go into her own country to her father, to complain how she had been abused, and could have no redress.

The servants telling the emperor, that the empress was going into her own country, he went to know the reason of this sudden departure, saying, 'I was in hopes you loved me so well, that you desired to be no where in the world but with me.'

She answered, 'It is true, my lord, I love you, but I had rather hear of your death, than see you destroyed by the subtle devices of your Wise Masters.'

The emperor replied, 'Dear madam, do not leave me, after we have lived together happily so long!—'

'Truly, sir,' said the empress, 'the blame is yours, for have you not promised that your son should die for the abuse he offered me, and yet he is alive to my disgrace.'—The emperor answered, 'A prince, in matters of life and death, ought to proceed with caution; and especially where the life of an only son

lies at stake, therefore what would you have me to do?—She answered, ‘I will gladly tell you, in a notable example, which will make you for the future not so willing to hearken to the masters;’ and then she began as followeth:

‘There reigned in Rome an emperor named Octavius, who was very rich, and loved gold above all things. In his reign the Romans committed many hostilities upon the neighbouring nations, insomuch that they entered into an alliance against the Romans for their preservation. And that which occasioned their reducing other nations to obedience was by the contrivance of one Virgil, who was a great magician; so that if any people offered to rebel, it was immediately discovered to them. The story says, that he made a tower, wherein he placed as many images as there are kingdoms in the world, and in the head of every image he put a bell; so that if any nation designed to invade the Romans, the image of that province would ring his bell; which the citizens of Rome hearing, armed themselves immediately, and attacked their adversaries; so that the Romans were dreaded throughout the world. He also made, for the benefit of the poor, a fire, which yielded so great a heat, that they came commonly to it, and thereby saved the expence of a fire in their own houses; opposite to this fire was placed a great statue of brass, holding in his left hand a Turkish bow, which was drawn with his right hand to the very head, ready to let fly; and on the breast was written,

Touch me not; for if you do,

You will create a deal of woe.

The image stood there many years; but at last a drunken scholar looking upon the writing, imagined

E

that

that there was under it great treasure, and that the superscription was only to frighten people from taking it; whereupon he gave the image such a blow that it fell to the ground, and immediately the fire was extinguished, and the place became as cold as if there never had been any fire there. At which the scholar was amazed, and ran away, having deprived the city of one of its greatest commodities, and the poor inhabitants cursed him for it.

After this, three kings, that had suffered much by the Romans, consulted how to revenge themselves for it; but one made answer, that it was in vain to attempt it, so long as the tower images subsisted. Upon this up starts three wise masters, and told them that they would undertake to destroy the tower and the images. The kings demanding what the cost would be, they replied, three tons of gold.

The masters then made choice of three vessels, one of earth, another of brass, and the third of silver, and filled them with gold, and departed for Rome, in a frigate, where being landed, they went near the city, and buried one of the vessels in a place, which they took notice of; then going into the city, they buried the other two near to the principal church of the city. This done, they agreed how they should accomplish their design.

After this manner they affected it. They went one morning to Octavius, and having demanded audience, they told him they were three brethren skilled in magic, and had it revealed to them, that the City of Rome abounded in hidden treasure, and they were come thither to discover it; first having the permission of his majesty, promising to give him all they found, and that he might bestow on them what part he pleased. The emperor glad to hear this news, immediately agreed to their request;

and

and as he was going to bed, they said, 'My lord, this night the eldest of us will have a vision or dream, and the third day he shall shew you what it signifies. And when the third day was come, he went to the emperor, and said, a treasure will be discovered to us, this morning, without the city, and since we find treasure without the city, we may well expect to find greater within it.' The emperor, joyful at what the dreamer said, told him, that he would go with him to see the issue of the business. Away they went to the place where the treasure was hidden; when the master took an astrolabe and quadrant to find the place exactly where the treasure was, and having diligently measured the ground, he bid them dig; and it was not long before they discovered a vessel; which the emperor seeing, he himself would take it up; and finding it to be as the master had said, he returned to the palace, giving a great reward to the master, hoping in a little while, by their means, to be master of a mint of gold.

The next morning another of them told the emperor that he had seen a vision, and that in the city they should find treasure, twice as much as they found the day before; and accordingly he ordered one to dig near the tower, where they had buried the other gold, and, after digging a while, they discovered two vessels, both filled with gold.

This so increased the affection of the king towards the masters, that he did nothing without their advice; and having given them a great reward, was in great expectation to see the effects of the third master's vision. Accordingly next morning he went unto the emperor, and told him, that not far from hence he had seen treasure in his vision, much richer than both the others; and the place where it

lay was six hundred yards from the palace; and then by the astrolabe and quadrant he measured the ground, and found that lay just under the foundation of the tower, where the images and statues were placed.

The emperor at this was a little startled, saying, 'God forbid, that I should, for the love of gold, destroy the tower, which may truly be said to be the prop of the Roman empire.' The master answered, 'That it would be great imprudence to hazard so rich and excellent a treasure as the tower was, only to gain another lesser treasure that was hidden in the earth; but if it might be attained without damaging the miraculous tower, then it would be indiscretion to let it lie there; and I dare undertake,' said he, 'to dig under the foundation without the least prejudice in the world to the tower.'

The emperor hearing this, was overjoyed, and in the night they were let into the tower, which, with the utmost expedition and diligence they undermined; and early next morning mounted their horses, and rode away to their own country; and before they were all out of the City of Rome, the tower fell down; and thus, by the villainy of those three masters, was the wonder of the world, and prop of the Roman empire destroyed.

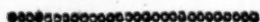
The senators in great consternation go to the emperor, to know the reason of the tower's being destroyed; who answered, 'Three treacherous wise masters, pretending to be soothsayers, persuaded me that a prodigious quantity of gold was hid under the foundation, which they would discover without any hurt to the tower or the statues; and they have deceived me.' These masters returning home were received with joy, and greatly rewarded; and it was not long before the enemy came against the Roman,

Romans, and took the city, and the Emperor Octavius had hardly the liberty to make his escape; who, from being a powerful prince, was reduced to the necessity to turn schoolmaster, and teach publicly in the Island of Merlin.

And thus as the unextinguishable fire was put out by a drunken scholar, so the tower was destroyed by the craft and cunning of three wise masters, and the Emperor of Rome forced to retire as a banished man into an island, and there to spend the remainder of his miserable life.

M O R A L.

The tower, where the statues were, represents your person; for so long as you reign, there is no enemy dares disturb the repose of your people; and therefore your son, with the Seven Wise Masters, study to undermine and destroy you. The images are emblems of your five senses, which these masters will quickly destroy, and set your son upon the imperial throne—The emperor said, ‘You have given me a good example, and I will take care that it may not happen to me as it did to the tower, for my son shall this day taste the bitterness of death.’ The empress replied, ‘If you do so, your reign will be glorious, and you will have success in all your enterprizes.’



The Example of the Fifth Master.

THE same day the emperor commanded his son to be led to the place of execution, whereupon the fifth master, named Josephus, hastened to the

emperor, desiring audience to his majesty; but the emperor angrily told him, 'That he deserved death, and should speedily have his deserts.'—The master replied, 'That they never shewed the prince any ill example; neither did they believe him inclinable to such crimes as were alledged against him.' 'As to his silence,' said the master, 'that proceeds from his wisdom, as your majesty will find in a few days, when he will be able to speak for himself; but that he would have committed incest with the empress, is a crime, that so wise a prince as he is, would certainly detest, and therefore I hope your majesty will not give credit to the accusations of your lady, and put your son to death, as your majesty will not be able to escape the divine vengeance, which punishes the authors of unjust sentences, as it did Hippocrates for the death of his nephew Gallienus.' The emperor said, 'I would gladly hear that story.'—The master answered, 'What will it avail to tell your majesty this story, if your son should be executed in the mean while? but if you please to suspend the death of your son, I will recite the example for your majesty.' The emperor ordering his son to be brought back, the master began as followeth:

There was a famous physician, named Hippocrates, who in learning excelled all others of the faculty. He had a nephew, named Gallienus; who was in skill and practice equal to his uncle. His uncle fearing in time he would excel him, endeavoured to hide from him every thing he could, lest he should arrive to a greater perfection in physic than himself; which Gallienus observing, applied himself more earnestly to the study of it; and this so much the more troubled his envious uncle.

About this time it happened that the King of Hungary sent a messenger to Hippocrates to cure his

his son, but Hippocrates being old, sent his nephew Gallienus, whom he knew sufficient for this cure; and when Gallienus came before the king, he was handsomely received by the king and queen; and the king conducted the physician to his son, who, when he had made his observation on his distemper, desired to speak with the queen in private, and then desired to know of her who was the father of the child?—She answered, ‘Sir, do you think that any but the king is his father?’—Gallienus answered, ‘The king is not his father.’—She replied, ‘Take heed what you say.’—Gallienus said, ‘If you do not tell me truly who is his father, I cannot cure your son,’ so he was going away; when she perceived this, she took an oath of him to be secret in what she should tell him, and then she, blushing, thus began:

‘Sir, I had lived long with the king, without any child, and therefore was accounted barren, and slighted by all people, and upon this I purposed to know whether the defect was in me, or my husband. Whereupon, seeing the miller one day come into the court, to bring corn to the granary, I caused him to enter my closet, and by that means I had the son by him.’

‘Then,’ said Gallienus smilingly, ‘fear not, madam, that I shall reveal the secret, and now I question not but to cure your son.’ And after divers remedies which he gave the sick prince, according to his natural constitution, he recovered; and when the child was well, after many thanks and large presents from the king and queen, he returned home.

When he was come home, Hippocrates asked him what he prescribed?—Gallienus told him compounds.—‘Then,’ said Hippocrates, ‘the queen is not virtuous and faithful to her husband.’—His nephew replied, ‘That was true.’

55 THE SEVEN WISE MASTERS.

Hippocrates, instead of taking pleasure in his nephew's performance, conceived a mortal hatred against him, so he purposed privately to kill him; and one day taking him with him into his garden, Hippocrates said, 'I see that herb is of extraordinary virtue, stoop and pluck it up.' Gallienus did so, whereupon the envious old man drew out his knife, and stabbed him, and buried him privately in the same place where he had killed him.



It happened after this that Hippocrates fell sick of the bloody flux, so that all his skill and experience signified nothing. His former scholars hearing this, came to visit him, and tried if they could do him any good; but all was to no purpose. Hippocrates perceiving this, commanded them to fill a great tub with water, and ordered them to make a hundred holes in it, and when they had done so, not a drop of water ran out; whereupon he said,
 • No

'No more virtue comes out of the herbs, than does water out of the tub; therefore all you do for me signifies nothing, but I must die.' Then he confessed the judgment of God was upon him, for murdering his nephew Gallienus, whom, had he been alive, could have cured him; and when he had said this, he turned to the wall and expired.

The emperor then said, 'What hurt had it been to Hippocrates if Gallienus had lived?'—The master answered, 'It had been better for Hippocrates, that at that time he had not died.'

M O R A L.

'The application, sir,' said the master, 'is easy; it shews, that no man ought to do any thing in anger or hastily; lest afterwards he should repent it, as Hippocrates did.' 'Sir,' said the master, 'you have proposed to put your son to death, on the report of your wife, but I beg you would consider what you do, and against whom; being assured that in the conclusion you will find your son is innocent of which at present you think he is guilty. And therefore, my lord, as this is a matter of the greatest moment, it well becomes the wisdom of your years, and royalty of your person, to consider well what you do; for you may have more wives, but possibly never such a son as this, whose wit and ability is sufficient to preserve your majesty from danger.'—The emperor taking great notice of what the master said, and natural affection together, so wrought upon him, that he ordered the execution that day against Dioclesian to be stopped.

The Sixth Example of the Empress.

THE inconstancy and instability of mankind appears in the Emperor Pontianus, who had no sooner resolved upon any thing, but at the discourse of the adverse party he changed his mind.

Josephus having prevailed for the prince's life, the empress grew so fretful, that the emperor took notice of it, and said, 'My lady, why are you so impatient?' -- She answered, 'My lord, how can I forbear, who am the only daughter of a king, and your wife, who has been most barbarously abused, even in your palace; and though you have promised to revenge my cause, yet you do not perform it.'

The emperor said, 'I know not what to do. You persuade me to put my son to death, and the masters dissuade me from it; and how to act in this affair, and come at the truth, I know not.'

'Then,' said the empress, 'you believe the masters more than me, nay, more than your own eyes; for which it will happen unto you as it did to a King of Persia, who was ruined by the Wise Masters.'

'Pray you,' said the emperor, 'relate to me all that happened to this king, and I assure you, you shall see yourself revenged both of Dioclesian and his masters.' And thus having comforted the empress, she began her narrative after this manner:

'There was a Prince of Persia, named Flamen-
tin, who, desirous to enlarge his kingdom, so pur-
sued his victories, that in the end he conquered all
the adjoining countries, and came to the confines of
Chaldea; and having raised a great army, he en-
tered the country of Chaldea, and put all they met
to the sword. The Chaldeans hearing this, they
all fled to their strongest city named Hur, where
they resolved to defend themselves, and lose their
lives,

lives, rather than yield to the Persians. The city was so closely besieged, that it was impossible to issue out, but with great difficulty, by the way of a mountain, which was joined to it. The siege continued several months, and the Persians losing neither their courage, nor wanting provisions, consulted with the three wise masters what they had best to do.

Now these wise masters, knowing that the Chaldeans had brought all their treasure into the City of Hur, resolved to betray their king, which they did after this manner. They intreated the king to permit them to depart from the camp, to celebrate a sacrifice, in order to discover, by the communication of spirits, what means they must use to reduce the Chaldeans to the necessity of yielding. To this the king consented, intreating them to be diligent in their sacrifices in the purposes aforesaid.

These wise masters leaving the camp, advised the King of Persia to attempt nothing against the city till their return; only to keep it closely besieged. This done, they travelled unto the mountain, where they remained until night, and then went towards the city; and being perceived by the centinel, who asked, who comes there? they answered, friends; and that they should conduct them to the king, to acquaint him with a matter of importance. The guard seeing but three, permitted them to enter the city, and they sent to the king to acquaint him with their arrival. They being before the king, desired private audience, and then retiring into a chamber, they declared who they were, saying, 'That the great compassion which they had for the poor inhabitants of the City of Hur, had moved them to come thither to advertise the king, that if they might be recompensed, they would cause the siege to be raised

raised, and make their enemy to leave the country of Chaldea.' The king, perceiving the design of these masters was to get money, offered them thirty thousand pounds. The masters were contented, and bid the king encourage his people, for within five days the siege should be raised; which they performed, as you shall hear presently.

In the City of Hur was a very large and high tower. The masters intending to play their project



on this tower, caused an image to be made of gigantic bigness, covering the same with burning glasses, and looking-glasses of several colours; then they made two golden wings, which gave great lustre to the image, and painted two swords of a bloody colour, that shined very clearly. They provided artificial fire works, to make a great noise like thunder and lightening.

All

All things thus provided, two of the philosophers turned the way they came, and the third stayed in the city to execute their project. The next morning the master that stayed behind put on his gigantic habit, and placed the golden wings on his shoulders, a great crown of gold on his head, and in each hand held a bloody sword: this done, with wild-fires he made a great noise, flashing and cracking, as if the whole City of Hur had been on fire; and in the midst the master appeared on the top of the tower, seeming to be of very large stature, exceeding human proportion; and the sun beams struck directly on the glasses, and dazzled the eyes of the beholders. After the wise master had for some time spread his wings, and fluttered with them, he began to brandish and flourish both his bloody swords, so that he seemed to the beholders to be fighting.

The Persians seeing this strange and dismal sight, were terrified, not knowing what should occasion it. In the midst of these passages, the two other wise masters, who were in the mountain, came running into the camp, and going directly to the king's tent, cried out, 'They were all dead men.'—'Why?' said the king.—'Do you not see, sir,' said they, 'the God of the Chaldeans is descended from heaven to defend them?' so that if we stay here any longer, we shall all be destroyed: therefore it is necessary for us to flee, lest we engage this god, and thereby lose our lives, as our companion hath done, who being desirous to appease his fury with certain new sacrifices, which he offered, was suddenly slain in the mountain by a thunder-bolt; which we seeing made all possible haste to acquaint you, that if you do not this day depart the place, none of your camp will escape.

And

THE SEVEN WISE MASTERS.

And thereupon the king and all began to flee, giving as much credit to these masters as if they had been gods; so that in an hour's time the siege was raised. The besieged seeing their enemies fly, fell on their rear so briskly, that they made great slaughter, and took so many prisoners, that it was wonderful; for the Persians fled without any order, thinking the God of the Chaldeans was still behind them, so that very few escaped.

The pursuit being finished, the Chaldeans returned to their city with great riches, for all the baggage of the Persians was left in the camp. The wise masters facing about, took the way of the mountain, and from thence returned to the City of Hur, where they were highly welcomed, and rewarded according to the agreement: and thus was the King of Persia destroyed by these treacherous masters, for the sake of money.

M O R A L.

As the King of Persia was deceived and ruined by his wise masters, so your Seven Wise Masters design to serve you, who, by their craft and subtilty, delude you, and in the end will betray you, that so your son may reign in your empire.—The emperor answered, 'That shall not be, for to-morrow Dioclesian shall die.'—And accordingly he ordered his son to be executed.

Example of the Sixth Master.

THE sixth master, named Cleophes, hearing what the emperor had decreed, hastened to the court, and

and saluted the emperor in a humble manner. The emperor, with an angry voice, told him, that he and the rest of the deceitful masters should certainly be put to death; for debauching his only son. The master replied, 'That if his majesty would have patience, in three days time his son would speak, and clear himself of the accusations laid to his charge; and therefore, if you put him to death for the words of your wife, it will happen to you as it did to a knight, who gave so much ear to his wife, that he was tied to a horse's tail, drawn through the city, and hanged on a gallows.' The emperor said, 'For the love of God tell me that example.'

'There was once an Emperor of Rome, that had three knights, whom he loved entirely, and in the same city was a knight that had married a beautiful lady, whom he doated upon very much, as you do on the empress. The lady had such a charming voice, that all who heard her were smitten with it. Amongst the rest, one of the knights happening to ride that way where she lived, was so charmed with her voice, that he fell in love with her; so going in, he revealed his passion to her, and demanded what he should give to sleep by her one night?—She answered, 'One hundred pounds.'—'Then,' said the knight, 'appoint the time, and I will give it you.'—She answered, 'When I see a convenient time I will send for you, sir.'—The next day she sung in the same place, and the second knight came that way, who, being likewise smitten with her, promised her one hundred pounds upon the same account.—The third day, by accident, came the other knight, to whom she also consented on the same terms.—These three knights so secretly agreed with the lady, that not one of them knew of the design of the other.

After this, the lady told her husband she had a matter of importance to reveal unto him, and if he would follow her direction, they should live in splendour all their days. He promising he would, she said, 'The emperor's three favourites are fallen in love with me, and unknown to each other have promised one hundred pounds each to lie with me; to obtain which, without polluting myself, I advise you, sir, to stand behind the gate, with your sword drawn, and as they come one after another, slay them; and so we shall have three hundred pounds without any man's knowledge.'—The knight answered, 'That murder seldom passed undiscovered, and we must expect, if it is discovered, to die the most shameful death.'—She replied, 'I will begin the work, and do you proceed, and fear nothing.'—And at last her husband consented.—The appointed time being



One, one, one, entered the house, and delivered his one hundred pounds, when her husband

was ready to receive him; for with a naked sword he ran him through, and he dropped down dead. It was not long before the second came, who fared no better than the first; and the third also underwent the same fate. Having finished the butchery, they conveyed the murdered bodies into a secret chamber.

The murderer had a brother, who was commander of the watch of the city, and with his attendants, going his circuits, was called in by his sister, telling him, that she had a matter of great importance to impart to him.—Upon this he sent away his attendants, and then bid her speak without fear, and he would assist her to the utmost of his power.—She said, ‘Yesterday a knight, an acquaintance of my husband’s, coming to visit him, after some words, in which the knight reflected upon me, they fell at such variance, that my husband slew him, whose body remains in the house, and we know not how to convey it away.’—‘Well, sister,’ replied he, ‘I will rid you of this trouble; help me to a sack, and I will put him in, and carry and throw him into the river Tyber, whose streams will quickly convey him into the sea, so that you shall hear no more of him.’

This accordingly he did, and then returning to his sister, he asked her for some of her best wine, saying, he had thrown the body into the sea, and by that time it was carried far enough.—She pretending to go for wine, went into the next room, and hastily cried out, ‘O lord! brother, I am undone, for the knight you carried to the river is returned.’—The brother astonished at this, said, ‘Give him me again, and I will see if he can return any more;’ so taking the body of the second knight, supposing he had been the first, he went to the river, and with a stone sunk him.

That done, he went again to his sister, and said, 'Now fill me up a glass of wine, for I have now sunk him so deep, that he will never rise again.' She hearing this, ran to fetch a bottle of wine; but hastily, and as much affrighted cries out, 'O lord! brother, he is risen again, and come out of the sea.' — Her brother, more surprized than before, said, 'What devil is this, that I have cast into the water twice, and yet he is come again? deliver him to me the third time, and I will prevent his coming again;' then she gave him the third knight, which he believed was the first, and he went without the city to a forest, and making a great fire, cast him therein; and when he was almost burnt, he went a little distance; in the mean time a knight chanced to ride that way, and seeing a fire, and the weather being cold and raw, he drew near to it to warm himself; and in that posture did the lady's brother find him when he returned; whereupon he asked, 'What he was?' — He answered, 'I am a knight.' — 'Then,' said the brother, 'thou a knight! thou art a devil; for first I cast thee into the water; after that, with a great stone I sunk thee; and the third time I put thee into the fire, supposing that thou hadst been burnt, and yet thou standest here. I will once again try what I can do.' And thereupon he seized on the travelling knight, and threw him, horse and all, into the fire, and there staid till they were quite burned.

After this manner she served several wooers, and amongst the rest came a little lawyer, who agreed to give her three hundred pounds for one night's lodging. At the time appointed the lawyer came, and delivered the money; but when he was to take his pleasure with her, her husband laid on him with a large cudgel, so that he kicked up his heels, and went to plead his cause in the other world.

Then they consulted what to do with his body, which not being wounded, her husband carried him to the lawyer's necessary-house, set him on the seat, and left him.

The lawyer's bed-fellow, knowing somewhat of this mighty appointment, sat up for him; and having occasion to go to the necessary, saw one sitting there; and making a near approach, perceived it was his bed-fellow, and calling him by his name, he answered not; he then believing that he was asleep, pulled him by the coat, and down dropped the lawyer on the floor, when he found that he was dead.

Our lawyer's bed-fellow supposing who had murdered him, took the lawyer on his back, carried him to the knight's house, and set him leaning against the door, and then returned home again.

Our murderess, having occasion about midnight to go to the door, opened it, when down fell the lawyer into the house; which she perceiving, calls her husband, and acquaints him with the business: upon this, he resolves to carry the body and throw it into the river. And as he walked along the street he heard some people walking and talking, whom, by their discourse, he perceived they were house-breakers, who had met with a prize, which they had in a sack, and who resolved to leave it under a stall while they went to a tavern to drink. Our murderer, who hid himself till they were gone, came to the place, and finding a sack that had two flitches of bacon in it, he took them out, and put the dead lawyer into it, and placing it under the stall, went home laden with the flitches of bacon. His wife seeing him with something on his back, thought he had brought back the lawyer; but he getting in doors, shewed her the bacon; and she understanding that they were enriched with another prize, went to bed well pleased that evening.

The rogues that stole the bacon having drank too long, they had not money enough to pay the reckoning; so they told the landlord, that if he would buy some bacon of them, they would enlarge the reckoning; the landlord told them, he would give them the market price with all his heart; whereupon one went and leached it; and setting down the load, they opened the sack, but instead of bacon the lawyer's head appeared. This amazed them all, but especially the landlord. They knew not what to say, but desired the landlord to be patient, and they would tell him the whole story; so related to him how they had it from a chandler's back house, which indeed they had plundered, and thither they would carry it again. The vinner thinking he might be counted a party concerned, was contented; so they carried the sack to the chandler's house, and left it where they found it.

The chandler, that morning, calling up his servant to carry corn to the mill to be ground, the servant had a mind to a breakfast, and a rasher of bacon was what he desired; so opening the sack to cut a rasher, he got hold of the lawyer's head, which so affrighted him that he cried out. His master coming to know the matter, concluded that they who took the bacon had left the dead man; and to be rid of him, they agreed that he should carry him towards the mill, and by the way drop or bury him. The servant consented to what the master said; but falling into company going that way, had not the opportunity; so being come to the mill, he espied some sacks of corn, of a miller's, going to market in a cart, and it being dark, the chandler's man made an exchange, and laid the sack with the lawyer on the cart, and taking the other sack, and laying it on his own horse, returned home.

And

And now the dead lawyer is on the miller's cart, and carried to market; which being exposed to sale, who should come to buy meal, but the knight and his lady that had killed the lawyer.

The woman opens a sack of meal, and buys it, but wanting another sack, the miller told her, the next was the same for quality and goodness; whereupon, putting in her hand to draw out some meal, she caught hold of the lawyer's hair; she upon this, tells the miller he designed to cheat her with some worse meal; wherefore, to be sure, some of the meal being taken out, and the lawyer's head appearing, she cried out, 'O lord! husband, the lawyer you killed is come again.' This saying was taken notice of, and they were had before a magistrate, where they confessed the fact, also the murder of three knights, for which they were sentenced to die, and were accordingly executed.

M O R A L.

By this we may learn what strange creatures some women are. This woman seemed to value her chastity, yet she was guilty of a greater crime, murder; therefore we ought not to give credit to some people's pretences to virtue, for they may be guilty of some vice that exceeds it. Whereupon the emperor replied, 'My son shall not die this day.' The master gave him thanks, and took his leave, and departed.

The Seventh Example of the Empress.

WHEN the empress heard that the prince was still living, she began to rave like one dis-

tracted, crying, 'What shall I do? unhappy woman that I am! I cannot survive the shame that is done me, therefore I will destroy myself'—'God forbid,' said the emperor; 'have a little patience, and you shall have justice done you.'—'You have promised me so,' answered the empress, 'many times, and yet I am not revenged; therefore it will certainly happen to you as it did to a king and his steward.'—The emperor desiring to hear that example, she said, 'It will signify nothing, for tomorrow the seventh master will plead for your son, as the other six have done; and you hearing your son speak, will be so ravished therewith, that all your love for me will be forgotten'—'That is impossible,' said the emperor; 'therefore, my dear, harbour no such thoughts.'—'Then my lord,' said she, 'I will relate the story to you; perhaps it may preserve both you and me from destruction'—The emperor bidding her proceed, she began as followeth:

There was a certain king, who loved his wife to that degree that he grew jealous of her, and enclosed her in a fair and stately castle. About the same time a valiant knight dreamed he saw one of the fairest queens that ever eyes beheld, by whose means he could arrive at great honours.

This dream made such an impression upon his fancy, that he was very confident that he should know the lady he dreamed of, if ever he should see her. Also the queen dreamed of the knight, and yet they were altogether strangers to each other.

The knight determined to travel to find her out; and after travelling through divers regions, at last he came into the city where the queen was kept in a strong castle by her jealous husband.

The knight walking near the castle where the queen was, she by chance from her window espied him

him, whom she recollected she had seen in her dream. The knight also looking up, perceived a lady at the window, whom his mind told him was she of whom he had dreamed; whereupon she wrote a letter, and dropped it from her chamber



window; and he having perused it, understood the lady's mind, so waited for an opportunity to get into her apartment.

This knight was famous at tilt and tournament, wherein his fame reached the king's ear; who sent for the knight, and conferred great honours upon him, made him one of his privy council, and gave him leave to build an apartment near the walls of the castle, that he might be near at hand to attend upon his majesty in case of need.

The knight now agreed with an ingenious workman to make him a private door into the queen's lodging; and when he had done, he rewarded him, and

and sent him into another country, because he should not make it known. After which, going into the queen's apartment, he discoursed with her of many things, particularly of the means they came acquainted by, each informing the other of their dreams. The night approaching, he besought the queen to let him sleep by her till the morning, and after some denial for custom sake, she consented.

In the morning the knight returned to his lodging. After this the queen, as a token of her love, gave him her wedding ring. The king little dreaming of the knight's treachery, made him comptroller of his house, and general of his forces.

It happened that the king was to ride a hunting, so he sent for his general to accompany him; and having spent the day in chasing wild beasts, the king sat down by a fountain to rest; and the general sitting next the king, fell asleep, with the ring upon his finger that the queen had given him. The king perceiving it, knew it well. When the general awaked, believing that the king had seen the ring, he pretended to be very sick, and said, 'My lord, I find myself so sick that if I do not make haste to my lodging, and procure relief, I am a dead man.'—The king answered, 'Go, my dear friend, in the name of God, and let nothing be wanting that my court or kingdom can afford.'

The general took leave of the king, and hastened to the queen, and gave her the ring again, telling her the king, he believed, had seen it on his finger as he was asleep, and that he had feigned himself sick to return to her with the ring, that she might have it to shew the king, if he should enquire after it; and then he returned to his lodging.

Not long after, the king visited the queen, whom she received very affectionately; when, after a lit-

le

He talk, the king said, 'My dear, let me see your wedding ring, for I have a great desire to see it.'—She answered, 'My best beloved, why do you desire to see it?'—He replied, 'It is my pleasure, therefore shew it me.'—Then she went to her cabinet, and brought the ring to her husband; and when he had viewed it, he said, 'My dear, pardon my unkind suspicion, for I verily thought I had seen the ring upon my general's finger.'—She answered, 'My lord, one ring may be like another, and workmen seldom make one piece of work, but another is able to do the same; but, however, I forgive you for suspecting me: you know the strength of the tower, and keep the keys yourself, and therefore can have no just cause to do it, though I were ever so ill inclined, as God is my witness I am not.'

Not long after the general made a great feast, and invited the king to dine with him, saying, 'My honoured lord, a lady, who is my love, being come from my native country into your majesty's dominions, I have made a feast, and humbly beg your majesty will honour me with your royal presence.'—The king readily complying with his request, the general went to the queen the secret way, and said, 'My dear lady, I beseech you to come to my apartment, and dress yourself in jewels and ornaments, after the custom of my country; for I have invited the king to dine with me, and I would have you sit at table, and entertain the king.'—The queen answered, she was ready to act as he desired, and so apparelled herself after the custom of the general's country. The king soon after arriving, she received him with the greatest complaisance; and the king welcoming her into his territories, and praising her beauty and deportment, he sat down at the table, and made the disguised queen sit next.

At several times it entered into the king's thoughts that this was his wife, as indeed it was, but by her strange habit and deportment, she remained undiscovered; and when the dinner was over, the general desired the lady to sing before the king; accordingly she sung a love song, which amazed the king the more, saying to himself, 'Sure this must be my queen! but how can it be, when I have the keys of the tower in my own custody?'

And thus was the king divided in his thoughts, till being no longer able to contain himself, he said something troubled his mind, and he must be gone.—The general desired to know of his majesty what disturbed him? the lady also seemed troubled, and said, 'If your majesty will please to continue here, we will order a masquerade, and give your majesty all the delight this place can afford. This rather adding to the king's suspicion, he angrily said, 'Take away the table, for I can continue here no longer, till I have resolved my mind.'—The general instantly obeyed the king, and returned him thanks for the honour he had done him.

The king going away, immediately went to the castle to see whether his queen was there or no; but in the mean time she went in at the private door, and stripping off her uppermost vesture, put herself in the same habit that he left her attired with. When the king found her there, and in the same dress he had left her in, he kindly embraced her, and said, 'My general having made a feast, for joy of the arrival of his lady, she seemed so much like you in person, behaviour, stature, and speech, that I was impatient to see whether you were here or not.'—'My lord,' replied the queen, 'why do you entertain such jealousies of my virtue? what reason have you to suspect me? the tower is so strong that you know

know there is no entering it, and you keep the keys yourself. You may remember, my lord, continued she, in seeming passion, that you suspected me, because your general had a ring like that you gave me, and do you still continue to suspect me? is it not sufficient to debar me of my liberty, but you must be jealous besides? therefore I tell you, my lord, if you do not forsake your jealousy, and release me from this confinement, before three days are expired I will end my days here.—The king answered,

My dear lady, your complaint is just; but let me beg your patience for a few days, and upon the word of a prince, you shall be set at liberty; and after a loving salute he took his leave of her.

Before two days were at an end, the general said to the king, 'My lord, I have served your majesty some time, and have now thoughts of returning to my native country; one favor I beg of your majesty, that you will be pleased to bestow your female servant upon your male, and I shall boast of the honor your majesty will do thereby so long as I live, — The king immediately granted his request, and told him, if he required much greater favors than that, he would grant them.'

The day of marriage being come, the king, dressed in his royal robes, went to the church, where the priest was ready to solemnize the nuptials. The queen, being dressed in the knight's lodging after the manner of his country, was led by two noblemen to the church, when the priest demanded who gave this lady to the knight? — The king answered, 'I will give her to him freely.' So, taking her by the hand, he put the queen's hand into the hand of the general; and the priest united them in the bands of wedlock. When all the rites were solemnized, the general said to the king, 'My lord, the ship

I intend to go with into my native country is now ready to sail; therefore I humbly beseech your majesty to accompany my spouse thereto, and admonish her to love and honor me.' The king readily agreed to his request, and accompanied them to the ship.—And then the king saluted her, and delivered her to his general, saying, 'My blessing be with you both, and the lord keep and conduct you safe to your own country.'

The general and his lady thanked the king for all favors, and then entered the ship.

The mariners hoisted sail, and soon the king lost sight of the ship. He then returned to his castle, and immediately went to his tower, and having unlocked the door, and searched up and down, at last he espied the private door, so he guessed how he was deceived; whereupon he fell into despair, and a disease seized him that soon took him off.

M O R A L.

My lord, you find what confidence the king had in his general, and yet he deceived him.—You put the same confidence in your wise masters, who endeavour to destroy me your wife, and you also; you see how your son hath abused me, and yet you suffer them to defend him, and insult me with impunity; therefore I fear it will happen to you worse than the king I have spoken of.

The emperor said, 'For this example's sake, to-morrow my son shall die.'

Example of the Seventh Master.

THE next day the emperor commanded his son to be led to execution; whereupon Erastus, the
Seventh

Seventh Wise Master, hastened before the emperor, and bowed reverently, according to his duty.

But the emperor with great indignation said, 'You have sent my son home lewd and dumb, whereas you had him from me innocent and dutiful; and for this reason you and your companions, with my rebellious son, shall surely die.'

The master answered, 'Most noble emperor, the time is not long betwixt this and to morrow noon, and then, by the grace of God, you shall hear him speak, and declare the truth of all things, but if he do not, then take his life, and the lives of us all.'

The emperor said, 'If I could but hear my son speak, and prove his innocence, I would not desire to live longer.'—The master answered, 'This you will certainly hear in a little time; but if you suffer him to be put to death, through the words of your wife, it will happen to you as it did to the knight, that died for a little blood which he saw his wife shed; to whose corpse afterwards she was most unnatural.'

The emperor said, 'Pray let me hear that story.' The master answered, 'Let your son be called back again, and I will give your majesty an example of the folly and imbecility of female nature.'

The emperor replied, 'I again suspend the execution of my son, upon condition, that to morrow I hear him speak, as you have promised.'—The master said, 'Do that my lord, for it shall certainly be so.'—And then he began his story as followeth:

'There was a knight that married a beautiful lady, whom he loved entirely. It happened that this knight and his lady, playing a game at chess, she struck her hand and made it bleed, at the sight of which her husband fell into a swoon; when his wife casting water upon his face, he came a little to himself,

himself, but the fright so surprized him, that he soon died, to the unspeakable grief of his wife; who, after his funeral obsequies were performed, made a vow, that she would never depart from the grave of her husband; but as a turtle dove, live and die there.

Her friends could by no means alter her resolution; whereupon they built a little house near the grave, and left her there, thinking that in time she would return again to her relations.

In the city was a law, that if an offender was hanged, the sheriff all night should watch the dead body, and if the body be stolen, the sheriff should lose his life, and forfeit his estate. It happened, a short time after the knight was dead, that a malefactor was hanged, so the sheriff was obliged to watch the body; and being winter, and the weather cold, he was almost frozen to death; but perceiving a smoke to ascend from a little house in the churchyard, he went to it, and knocked at the door.—The mournful lady asked who was there:—The sheriff replied, ‘I am the sheriff, that has endured so much cold, that I shall perish, unless you suffer me to warm myself.’—She said, ‘I fear you will be talking of my misfortune, and aggravate my affliction.’—But he answered, ‘For God’s sake, dear madam, let me warm myself, and I will say nothing that shall afflict or disturb you.’

Then having warmed himself, he said, ‘Dear madam, I would, with your permission, speak one word.’—She answered, ‘Sir, say what you please.’ Then he said, ‘Madam, you are a lady, in the prime of your youth; were it not better to dwell at home, than to waste yourself here with sorrow and weeping.’ She said, ‘Sir, did you know the occasion you would alter your opinion;’ and then related

the

the story to him.—‘Madam,’ said he, ‘I am sorry for your misfortune;’ and then thanking her for the benefit of her fire, returned to the gallows, admiring the love of the widow to her deceased husband, but, to his amazement, he found the thief was stolen away, whereupon he cried out, ‘Woe, woe is me! what shall I do?’—And being distracted with horror, he returned to the widow, beat his breast, tore his hair, and stamped on the ground like a distracted person; whereupon the poor widow perceiving his affliction, asked him the occasion of all his lamentation.

‘Madam,’ said he, ‘the laws of the city are, when any man is hanged, and stolen from the gallows, the sheriff’s life and goods are in the king’s hands. Now it happened while I was here, warming me, the thief was stolen away; and therefore, for the love of God, give me your advice.’

She perceiving that he was a handsome man, answered, ‘Forbear weeping, and follow my advice, and all shall be well.’—He desired her to proceed.—Said she, ‘In the first place, you must promise me marriage.’—He replied, ‘That would be the greatest pleasure to him, next to preserving his life.’

Then she vowed in the presence of God, that she accepted him for a husband; and he vowed to accept her for a wife.—‘Well, now sir,’ said she, ‘we must take my husband out of the grave, who, God help him, died for the love of me, and hang him upon the gallows instead of the thief; for now he is dead, that’s all he is good for.’

The sheriff approving of the preposition, opened the sepulchre, and drew him out: ‘But,’ said he, ‘madam, the thief had two of his teeth beaten out, and I fear that may cause a discovery.’—Upon this, she replied, ‘Take a stone and beat out two of his teeth.’

80 THE SEVEN WISE MASTERS.

teeth'—The sheriff replied, 'I have not a heart to do it, the compassion of my nature is so great.'

She readily answered, 'He was a tender husband unto me, yet I can do this for the love of you.'

—Then she took a stone and beat out two of his teeth, and bid him hang him up instead of the thief.

'Alas!' said the sheriff, 'What shall we do now? the thief, when taken, was wounded, and lost both his ears:—Then said she, 'Lend me your knife, and you shall see what I can do for the love of you; and then she cut off both his ears, and said now hang him up.'



Which done, they retired to consult their mutual happiness.—The master having finished this example, proceeded to make the following

MORAL,

M O R A L.

‘ From thence we may learn the instability of woman, of whom there is no great heed to be taken, especially when they are in their passions, as I may conclude now the empress is ; but I believe, in the conclusion, you will find her present hate is the effect of former love ; but be that as it will,’ said the master, ‘ to-morrow you shall hear him speak, and then he will shew you the truth betwixt us and the empress.’

And so having obtained a reprieve of the emperor till the next day, he departed.

Dioclesian, the Emperor's Son, complains of the Empress, and defends himself.

THE term of days being expired, in which the prince was to speak, he sent to the emperor to desire an audience, that he might vindicate himself from the charge against him by the empress.

The emperor was overjoyed to hear that his son spake, and ordered him to be brought before him. Being come to the emperor's palace, the senators and nobility were sent for, to hear what defence Dioclesian would make for himself ; and after silence was proclaimed, the prince said, ‘ My dear lord, Before I defend myself, I beseech you to order the empress, with all her maids of honour, to be present. The emperor then sent for the empress without delay ; who, with her ladies, appeared accordingly.

‘ Then,’ said the prince, ‘ I beg they may stand in a row, that I may see them.’ When this was done, ‘ My lords,’ said the prince, ‘ behold that chamber-maid

maid in green, who is the empress's particular favorite; command her to be unclothed, that we may see what she is.'—The emperor answered, 'That



would be shame to have a naked woman standing before us.'—The prince replied, 'If it be a woman, it is my shame; if not, the shame will be upon the empress.'—When he was unclothed, he appeared to be a man, to the astonishment of all present. Then, said the prince, 'Behold, my lord, this adulterer hath often defiled your bed, which you did not know.'

And hereupon the emperor immediately ordered that they should be burnt. 'But,' the prince said, 'I beseech your majesty to defer the sentence till I have cleared myself of all the crimes she has alleged against me,' and then the prince proceeded to defend himself in the following words:

When

When your imperial majesty was pleased to send for me, at the empress's earnest request, then I, with my masters, consulted the stars, by which I perceived, that if I should speak to you, or any person living, within the space of seven days, I should die a most shameful death; and for that cause only did I forbear to speak till now. And whereas the empress hath most unjustly accused me that I ill treated her; it is a most gross scandal and falsity, for she endeavourud to provoke me to defile your bed; and when she could not obtain her desire, she then began to tear her cloaths, and scratch her visage till she bled, and cried out that I would have forced her, and that I had most inhumanly torn her flesh.'

When the emperor heard this, he beheld her with the utmost indignation, and said, 'O wicked woman, was not thy concealed adultery sufficient, but thou must endeavour to debauch my son.'

The empress fell at the emperor's feet, and implored mercy; but the emperor said, 'O thou cursed woman! thou art not worthy of mercy, but deservest to die in three respects: *First*, In that thou hast committed adultery. *Secondly*, In that thou most lasciviously provoked my son to a most abominable sin, and laid the crime unjustly upon him. *Thirdly* and *lastly*, In that thou hast every day incited me to put my son to death; therefore the law shall have its course, and thou shalt suffer according to thy deserts, that it may deter every one from such wicked actions and false accusations; and may be an encouragement to all good men, by shewing that God never forsakes the innocent, nor suffers the wicked long to triumph over them that trust in him; and that though they may awhile suffer, through malice.

81 THE SEVEN WISE MASTERS.

malice and persecution, yet God never fails to turn the malice of their enemies to their own confusion.

The empress hearing this, threw herself at the emperor's feet, and implored forgiveness, but in vain, for the judges, after mature deliberation, gave the following sentence:

“The wickedness, adultery, and perfidiousness of the empress visibly condemn her, and therefore we give sentence, that she shall be drawn through the principal streets of the city upon a sledge, and then be burnt to death: we also adjudge the sentence, that the infamous adulterer shall be cut in pieces, and his flesh given to the dogs, and the fowls of the air.”

This sentence was applauded by the people and put in execution.

Some years after the emperor died, leaving his crown and dignity to his son Dioclesian, who made his masters his chief counsellors, and by their advice governed the empire with great wisdom and glory, insomuch that he excelled all his predecessors in riches, honor, and justice; and after a long series of happiness, in a good old age, he ended his days in joy and tranquillity, to the praise and glory of Almighty God.

